

**IRAN NEWS Its Condolences Over the Martyrdom Anniversary Sixth Imam of Shiites, Imam Jaafar Sadeq (AS), On Tuesday and National Holiday. The Next Issue Will Hit the News-Stands on Wednesday**

# IRAN NEWS

**Police Chief of the Southern Iranian Province of Hormozgan Has Said That the Forces Secured the Release of Two Foreign Tourists In Less Than 24 Hours Without Revealing Their Nationalities**

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**2 DOMESTIC**

**Technical Cooperation Between Tehran, IAEA to Witness Great Progress**



> SEE PAGE 2

**3 DOMESTIC**

**Over 200 Foreign Companies to Partake In Iran Oil Show**



> SEE PAGE 3

**4 INTERNATIONAL**

**G7 Summit Statement To Target China's Economic Coercion**



> SEE PAGE 4

**8 SPORTS**

**Lakers Topple Warriors To Advance, Heat Reach East Finals**



> SEE PAGE 8

## U.S. Failed to Prevent Iranian Navy Flotilla From Crossing Panama Canal

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The United States once failed to prevent the Iranian Navy's 86th flotilla of warships from sailing through the Panama Canal, Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani recounts, as the flotilla docks at Oman's Salalah port.

Irani said that "global arrogance" tried to block the flotilla's mission through threats and sanctions, but it did not succeed.

"The [US] sanction was no more than a rant based on international law. They could not even prevent the flotilla from sailing into the Panama Canal ... This was another slap on the face of the Great Satan," he told Fars news agency on Saturday.

For the first time in Iran's naval history, the 86th flotilla, comprised of Dena and Makran warships, undertook a long voyage around the world and sailed in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans without relying on aid from shores.

It set sail from Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf on September 20, 2022. Now, on the 236th day of its voyage, the flotilla docked at Oman's Salalah port as its last stop. **See Page 7**

## U.S. Has Committed Many Crimes Against Humanity

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian rights official has drawn attention to the atrocities committed by the United States against nations, saying the American regime has directly targeted civilians.

Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, underlined on Sunday the need to increase Iranian public awareness about U.S. crimes and take international measures in this regard.

"In the domestic arena, people should know what crimes the U.S. has committed against us. This is because the U.S. atrocities have directly targeted the people," he added.

"The U.S. has committed two major crimes against the Iranian people in the fields of terrorism and sanctions. We have 17,000 victims of terror, among them those killed in the cowardly assassination of Qassem Soleimani and his companions."

Iran regards itself a major victim of terrorism as it has lost over 17,000 people in acts of terror since the 1979 victory of the Islamic Revolution. **See Page 7**

## Leader Hails Progress of Publishing Industry Despite Problems



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei paid a visit to the 34th Tehran International Book Fair at the Grand Mosalla of Tehran on Sunday morning.

As per tradition, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei paid a visit to the 34th Tehran International Book Fair currently underway at the Grand Mosalla of Tehran.

While there, Ayatollah Khamenei engaged in talks with a number of publishers present at the fair.

During his visit, the Leader called on Iranian publishers to work hard to promote the quantity and quality of the books to attract children and teenagers.

Ayatollah Khamenei also criticized the domination of foreign stories over domestic ones, saying that is a big disadvantage.

Speaking in an interview with an IRIB reporter on the sidelines of the fair, the Leader attached great importance to the role of books in the cultural development of the country.

He also put a great emphasis on the translation of Iranian books into foreign languages.

ayatollah Khamenei said during his visit to the exhibition: "To attract children and teenagers, work as much as you can in terms of quantity and quality."

The Leader also noted: "Foreign stories related to children still dominate the children's books, which is a great disadvantage."

He also said that people's attendance in the book fair according to the statistics has been high and the number of books purchased by the people has been very good.

He added that despite some problems in the country, book publishing has progressed and added that rise in the price of paper and in some cases low quality of paper have been the major problem for the publishers and said that Islamic Guidance Minister has announced good news for producing good quality paper and expressed hope these actions would lead to the drop in the price of book.

In the end, the Leader hailed the atmosphere of the fair due to the presence of youths.

Over the years, Tehran International Book Fair has turned into a landmark book fair in West Asia and Asia after holding 31 editions in a row.

This year, nearly 100 foreign publishers, 200 booksellers, and 2,700 domestic publishers are active in the virtual and in-person section of the book fair.

The 32nd Tehran Book Fair will wrap up on May 30, 2023.

## Iran Tops World Leading Countries In Oil Pipeline Construction

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has ranked first in the world in construction of oil transmission pipelines despite US-led sanctions targeting the country's energy sector, according to a report.

In its latest report released, Global Energy Monitor, which tracks energy projects across the world, said Iran tops the 20 developers of oil pipelines with over 1,900 kilometers of pipelines being constructed across the country.

The report demonstrates that Iran, in spite of being under illegal sanctions by the US, has the largest oil pipeline construction operation in the world, followed by India, Niger, Canada and Benin.

The total oil pipeline under construction in Iran is 12 times higher than that of the United States, which is estimated to be 150 kilometers, the data showed.

The world's five leading companies developing oil transmission pipelines are state-owned enterprises and private companies, including Iran's Ministry of Petroleum, the China National Petroleum Corporation, Iraq's Ministry of Oil, India's Numaligarh Refinery Limited and France's TotalEnergies.

Meanwhile, Global Energy Monitor said 9,100 kilometers of oil pipelines are under construction throughout the world, and planning is underway for the construction of additional 21,900 kilometers, adding that the total cost of construction of these pipelines stands at \$131.9 billion.

According to new data from the tracker, about half of the under-construction oil pipeline, which includes 4,400 kilometers of pipelines, is located in Africa and West Asia.

The two regions are home to 49% of all oil transmission pipelines under construction globally at a cost of \$25.3 billion.

## ViewPoint

### By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

## Marxism Is Not an Economic School

A couple of days ago I was busy watching a debate on a TV program, Jahan Ara, where Dr. Toghiani and DR. Jebraeeli were present in the debate that was anchored by Mr. Sabeti.

The debate heated up and both respected intellectuals debated on the topic of base of prices and the way of government's manipulation in influencing the idea of free market in the economy but the debate was more an argument than a debate because both sides considered each other pre-convicted of insulating their opinions on the structure of economic decision-makers of the government and therefore a hugger mugger picture from the economy has been painted.

In fact, both sides with their own languages (bringing it but not mentioning it) were painting this picture that Iran's economy has no clear definition of any economic school. Toghiani was accusing the other side of being a Marxist and in return Jebraeeli was accusing Toghiani of being a pro-liberalism capitalist. Of course both sides did not spare anything to undermine the talks and doctrine of the other side.

I believe these two ways of view regarding the debate topic from the rough-and-tumble economic team of the government in the issue of economy, which has been actually comprised of a political team than an economic-wise, leads to this that all definitions in Iran's economic bed have more political goals than economic ones. In other words, few officials are found to lay a stable rail for persistent economic decisions.

During the all past 45 years, most of decisions made in the field of economy in Iran has had political flavor. The Islamic Republic of Iran in its foreign policy whether right or wrong has followed a certain and defined policy and coincidentally in establishing the anti-West culture has achieved massive successes both for Asia and the region but in taking economic decisions in fact it has acted like a storm-hit downwind boat in the money sea and has gone ahead till now and the reason why it has not collapsed yet is reliance on injection of petro-dollars.

If I were to express a bold opinion, I could claim that this bewilderment and confusion has cost a great deal for the country. The proof for this issue that can be mentioned is some \$2,000b of oil and non-oil sales have not even led to completion of 30% of the infrastructures. I put growth in military and nuclear structure and to some extent growth in scientific, industrial and agriculture structures in the mentioned 30%. Despite it, this 30% growth has helped to maintain the hegemony of the revolution in Iran and to some extent in the region and I claim if we moved in the direction of a defined economy, at least we would not have had the current domestic problems and both sanctions and media hostilities could have less destructive efforts on the trend of materializing the goals of our Islamic Revolution.

On this issue, I do not have any intention to analyze the past wrong actions. I see the mentality of the 13th government in supporting production and approach to privatization different from the past governments but it does not mean that I do not see the problems in decision making of the government in orienting the economy.

The previous governments had raised many problem statements in front of Iranian nation without any solutions for them and I should say God willing the plague of their presence has been eradicated and today the government, Majlis and Judiciary are preparing some intermittent solutions for some of these issues and have turned into crisis managers.

Economy also like foreign policy should find a single voice to move in a clear and bright direction. The views of Marxism and socialism are also unable to save the economy and it costs heavy because it leaves fundamental distortions on the axes of creating obstruction. **See Page 7**

Sokhan Gostar Institute

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## Official Declines to Talk About Ban on Iranian Ships in China

TEHRAN – The official refused to comment on the embarrassing revelation that China's private ports are complying with a ban on Iranian shipping. Ali Nazi, Deputy Director of Ports and Maritime Organization told ILNA news agency on Saturday that such "information is confidential."

China has handed over most main ports to the private sector and foreign companies. These operators do not allow Iranian ships to dock, in fear of being subject to U.S. sanctions. According to ILNA, Iranian shipping can dock in Chinese government-controlled ports, but their inadequate facilities and equipment increase the loading and unloading time, while their locations increase voyage time and lead to higher costs.

## Technical Cooperation Between Tehran, IAEA to Witness Great Progress

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says the course of the country's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) within technical frameworks will soon witness a great progress.**

He stressed that Tehran is exchanging messages with Washington through various channels during talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal and the removal of sanctions.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks in an exclusive interview with IRNA published on Sunday.

The top Iranian diplomat stated that "a good development has taken place in the course of cooperation" between the Islamic Republic and the UN nuclear agency, noting that Iran had always been critical of IAEA chief Rafael Grossi's politically-charged approach towards the country and that he has even brought up the issue in a face-to-face meeting with him.

Amirabdollahian went on to underscore that President Ebrahim Raisi has declared it so transparently that Iran is serious about cooperation with the IAEA, and expects the UN nuclear agency to fulfill its duties within the technical frameworks and stay away from political issues.

"The more the IAEA distances itself from a political approach and moves towards technical cooperation, the more the path for our agreements opens up," the Iranian foreign minister pointed out.

Iran, at the same time as adhering to the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions law passed by the parliament in December 2020, is determined to settle disputes and resolve differences with the International Atomic Energy within a framework of constructive and mutual interaction and technical cooperation, Amirabdollahian highlighted.

The Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions law prompted the Iranian administration to restrict the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s inspections and accelerate the development of the country's nuclear program beyond



the limits set by the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We are close to the next IAEA meeting, and we have notified Mr. Grossi very clearly that Iran and the agency can establish a good and reassuring cooperation if certain foreign parties do not get in the way," the Iranian foreign minister said.

The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry says Tehran is committed to diplomacy to resolve remaining issues with the UN nuclear watchdog.

Amirabdollahian further emphasized that good progress will be made in the course of technical cooperation between Iran and the IAEA as both sides have expressed strong desire to take such a step, noting that the exchange of delegations is taking place away from any media hype.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian foreign minister noted that the exchange of messages with the US is in progress through different channels.

He stated that Iranian Foreign Ministry is continually seeking to neutralize Western sanctions at the same time as it is trying to ensure their removal during talks on the revival of the JCPOA.

Iran and the IAEA are currently in a dispute triggered by the agency's Israeli-influenced accusations, which were leveled against Tehran's peaceful nuclear activities. The IAEA insists to probe into what it claims to be "uranium traces" found at "undeclared nuclear sites" in Iran.

The issue has emerged as a key sticking point in talks aimed at salvaging the 2015 nuclear deal, which remain stalled since last August. Iran has dismissed the probe as "politically motivated."

## Iran to Set Up Sports Body for Refugees

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of international affairs at Iran's Ministry of Sports and Youth has said a sports body is to be established for the refugees in the country.

Mohammad Hassan Taghizadeh said that a large number of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and African countries have been participating in professional and amateur sports.

Like many countries, there was no coherent body in Iran to organize the sports affairs of refugees, he said, adding that one of the issues the international sports community is seeking to solve is that of sports refugees.

Some female refugees in the world are faced with many restrictions in sporting activities, he underlined.

That is why the sportswomen are keen on seeking asylum in the Islamic Republic, he further noted.

## Iran Births Drop By 3.8% in Year to March

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran saw a 3.8% drop in its number of births in the Iranian calendar year ending on March 20, 2023, compared to the previous year, official data showed.

A total of 1,075,381 births were recorded in the period, the National Organization for Civil Registration said on Saturday. That represents a slight decline from the 1,116,211 babies who were born in the previous Iranian calendar year.

Of the new births, 555,855 were boys and 519,436 were girls.

Tehran Province led other provinces, with the highest number of registered births at 137,842. It was followed by Razavi Khorasan with 101,744, and Sistan and Baluchestan Province with 89,934 cases.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad had the lowest birth rate with 9,908 cases, followed by Ilam with 7,426, and Semnan with 6,916.

The Iranian government has been encouraging couples to have more children to reverse the sluggish population growth, offering incentives such as subsidies and extended maternity and paternity leave.

## Iraqi Ambassador Summoned

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian foreign ministry summoned Iraq's envoy to Tehran following the continuation of terrorist groups' movements in Iraq's Kurdistan region, the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson said.

The Iraqi ambassador was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the members of the separatist groups were invited to an official ceremony in Iraq's Kurdistan region as well, Nasser Kanaani told Fars News Agency.

Condemning the aforementioned actions, the Iranian side described the events as contrary to the recent security agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, according to Kanaani.

Iran also urged implementing the clauses of the agreement and combating the factors that disturb the security of the two countries, he added.

Kanaani also noted that the Iraqi ambassador said he will reflect the protests of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Iraqi government.

## IRGC Enjoys Long-Range, Precision-Guided Missile

TEHRAN (MNA) - Senior advisor to the commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force has said that Iran enjoys long-range and precision-guided missiles that are completely domestic and rely on the country's knowledge.

Brigadier General Ali Balali said that the Islamic Republic has made significant advances in the construction of drones by using indigenous knowledge over the past few decades.

Today, the knowledge and capability of various UAVs inside the country are all domestic and the UAVs are being built in the country, he added.

Balali noted that the power of the IRGC Aerospace Force in the fields of UAVs has made Iran one of the significant, influential, and defining power in the region and world.

Referring to the capabilities of domestic missiles, he said that the Iran-made missiles' range has reached more than 2,000 kilometers with pinpoint accuracy.

Stating that today the Islamic Republic has reached a significant deterrence power that no country can ignore the country, he underlined that one of the characteristics of the IRGC's missile capabilities is the diversity of these products tailored to the needs and potential threats.

## Iran, Egypt Will Soon Re-Open Embassies

TEHRAN (IFP) - An Iranian lawmaker says the Embassies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arab Republic of Egypt will resume activities in both countries in the near future, following a historic reconciliation deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Fada-Hossein Maleki, who sits on the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said a revival of relations with Egypt is of significance since it is one of the "old and civilization-rich" countries of the region and the entire world. He said talks are being mediated by Iraq between Iran and Egypt, and their bilateral ties will soon return back on track.

Following a re-opening of embassies, a meeting will be planned between Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the lawmaker added. Such a development appears to be an outcome of a normalization agreement reached between Saudi Arabia and Iran in March, following a seven-year suspension in ties between the two Middle East powers.

There are also reports indicating that a similar diplomatic process is underway between Iran and Bahrain. Bahrain severed diplomatic ties with Iran in January 2016.

## Iran, Austria Ink MoU to Expand Cooperation in Geoscience Fields

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) and the Museum of Natural History Vienna on Saturday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in order to develop bilateral cooperation in different geoscience fields.

The MoU was inked between Iranian Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Alireza Shahidi and Mathias Harzhauser on behalf of Dr. Kathryn

Wadland, the head of the Geological-Paleontological Department at the Natural History Museum Vienna.

During their meeting, the two sides exchanged views on the technical and scientific capacities in different geoscience fields.

Holding geoscience exhibitions, developing scientific cooperation, analyzing data and training modern technologies were among the topics discussed by the two sides.

## 3rd KANS Scientific Competition Ends With Awarding Winners

TEHRAN - Six winners were awarded during the closing ceremony of the 3rd KANS (Knowledge Application and Notion for Society) scientific competition at Pardis Technology Park on May 12.

The 3rd round of KANS scientific competition, held concurrently with International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX 2023) at Tehran's Pardis Technology Park from May 9 to May 12, came to an end with the awarding ceremony of KANS winners.

The final day of 3rd round of KANS, held by the Mustafa(PBUH) Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF), began with a speech from Said Hossein Rafei, Head of the secretariat of KANS scientific competition. He explained the details of the competition to the audience.

Rafei introduced the 6 fields of competition, the limitation of the competition, the sections of the competition, and the screening process.

He announced that "2 fields are newly added in this round of the competition: 'Electronics & Robotics' and 'Agriculture & Food Industry'."

"Moreover, a special section is added for an outstanding researcher under 30 years of age: 'Future Star'," he continued.

"In this round of the competition, we received 881 videos received from 22 countries," he said.

According to Rafei, "each video was evaluated by at least 3 evaluators."

Finally, 20 nominates were selected for the final round of the competition, out of which 6 winners were selected.

Next, the winner in each field of the competition gave a speech about their achievement to the audience.

Head of the 3rd KANS Scientific Competition, Saeid Sohrabpour, delivered a speech during the closing ceremony, pointing to the mission of KANS undertaken by the MSTF.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



CEO of the MSTF, Mahdi Saffarinia; Seyed Ali Omrani, Executive Director of the MSTF; Hajebrahimi, a member of the board at MSTF; Hasan Zohour, member of Mustafa(PBUH) Prize scientific committee; and Saeid Sohrabpour awarded the winners at the ceremony.

The winner in the field of "ICT & AI" was Siti Fauziah Toha from Malaysia for "A Bio Inspired AI-Based Obstacle Avoidance and Geospatial Route Prediction Assistive Travelling for Visually Impaired Community."

Iman Saleh from Qatar was the winner of "Agriculture & Food Industry" field for her scientific achievement "Effects of active phytochemicals of Prosopis juliflora as anti-spoiling agents of postharvest fruits."

In the field of "Electronics & Robotics," Azam Karami from Iran won for "Automatic Fault Detection in Power Transmission Lines."

Another Malaysian winner of the 3rd round of KANS was Nur Faeza Abu Kassim. She was the winner of "Energy, Water & Environment" field for her scientific achievement "BioGel Moz: Green Biopolymer Hydrogel Beads as Frontier Product for Combating Dengue."

Sina Mozaffari-Jovin from Iran was the winner in the field of "Health & Med-Tech" for "GMP production and preclinical evaluation of the immunogenicity of the mRNA-lipid nanoparticle vaccine candidate Iribovax against SARS-CoV-2 in nonhuman primates in Iran."

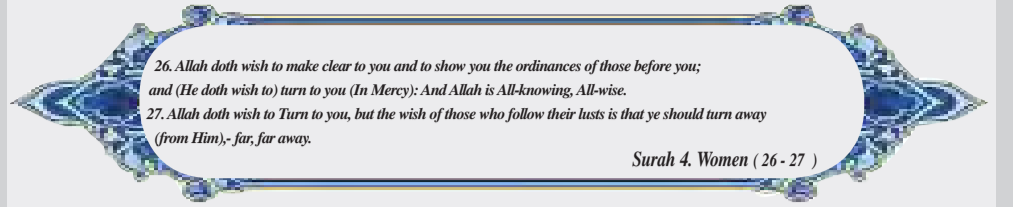
"The Future Star" was a young Azerbaijani PhD student, Nadir Atayev, who won for his achievement "Electronics, telecommunication and aerospace hardware problems with advanced research in optical communication subsystem of both ground and in-orbit nanosatellite."

The winners received their awards, took group pictures, and left the stage to rapturous applause of the audience.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:22
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:20
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	04:58



# Over 200 Foreign Companies to Partake In Iran Oil Show

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**SHANA - More than 200 foreign companies from 13 countries will participate in the 27th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, aka Iran Oil Show 2023, the oil Ministry's public relations director announced here.**

Speaking in a press conference, Ali Forouzandeh, named Russia, China, Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and India as some of the participating countries, adding some 1,500 domestic companies are also taking part in the upcoming exhibition.

The number of foreign companies attending this year's exhibition has grown 100 percent, as the number of domestic participants shows a 35 percent increase, said the spokesman.

It was not possible to admit all applicants' requests for taking part in Iran Oil Show 2023, Forouzandeh continued.

Iranian and Russian companies will hold business-to-business (B2B) meetings a day before the exhibition's kickoff with the aim of familiarizing the country's private sector with the allied states.

About 100 Russian and 200 Iranian companies have registered for such meetings and are scheduled to hold bilateral and multilateral talks on their deals, including the purchase of products and the transfer of technologies.

According to the Secretariat of Iran-Russia Joint Economic Commission, the two sides' delegations comprising four working groups for trading oil, gas, and petrochemical products, investment and export of technical and engineering services, manufacture, supply and repair of oil equipment and technological and knowledge-based cooperation will exchange views on boosting bilateral trade ties.

The meetings are aimed at familiarizing the Iranian and Russian delegations with each other's regulations, incentives for investment in Iran, and investment opportunities in its oil, gas, and petrochemical industries.

Relations and cooperation between Iran and Russia, the two largest holders of the



world's oil and gas reserves, have been put on a new track under the Raisi administration, prompting the two countries to seek the expansion of their ties in different areas, including economic and energy sectors.

Iran and Russia will hold three joint panels at the venue of the exhibition, Tehran International Permanent Fairground, slated for May 17-20, said the spokesman, adding the two sides' trade conference will be also held at the ministry's Kushk Hall Center.

An entire hall has been allocated to Russian and Chinese companies to showcase their latest achievements and equipment, stated Forouzandeh, stressing that this edition of the exhibition is aimed at boosting energy relations.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, 100 events will be held, he said, adding different sectors of the Oil Ministry and the private sector's companies will sign contracts and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and knowledge-based companies will hold meetings.

Homegrown oil equipment will be displayed at the exhibition, Forouzandeh mentioned. The official said Iran's oil industry is on the verge of internationalization, as it has now the capacity to supply the world markets with homegrown equipment and transfer its technologies.

Construction of refineries beyond Iran's borders is a striking example of the internationalization of the country's oil industry, he boasted.

Pointing to the motto of the 27th exhibition - Oil Industry; Technological Production, Optimal Consumption - he said consumption is among challenges the country is faced with.

The problem should be addressed, Forouzandeh emphasized, calling for policymakers, technicians, and manufacturers to provide solutions.

# Over 2.9m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,958,011 tons of commodities and 100 vehicles with a total trading value of more than \$628m on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,520,596 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$427m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,249,659 tons of cement, 754,000 tons of iron ore, 372,507 tons of steel, 131,000 tons of sponge iron, 7,415 tons of aluminum, 7,025 tons of copper, 2,000 tons of coke, 780 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 100 vehicles.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 428,994 tons of commodities worth more than \$196m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 133,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 127,752 tons of bitumen, 97,858 tons of polymeric products, 39,388 tons of chemicals, 19,000 tons of lube cut, 9,000 tons of sulfur, 3,466 tons of base oil, 900 tons of insulation, 500 tons of petroleum products and 110 tons of gas feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 8,420 tons of commodities on its side market.

# NDF Assets Amount to \$150b

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) has said the fund's total assets currently amount to \$150 billion, and the fund's current balance stands at \$10 billion, IRIB reported.

Speaking in a conference on Sunday, Mehdi Ghazanfari said NDF has loaned more than \$100 billion to the governments which should be repaid to the fund.

"Governments have so far received more than 100 billion dollars of low-interest facilities from the fund. Claims are being received in a good process and we are providing facilities," Ghazanfari said.

# Iran Planning to Attend MIMS Automobility Moscow 2023 Fair



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The secretary of the Iranian Specialized Manufacturers of Auto Parts Association (ISMAPA) said that leading parts manufacturers of the country will take part at MIMS Automobility Moscow 2023 for the second consecutive year in line with boosting production and exports.

Arash Mohebbinejad made the comment in an interview with IRNA on Sunday and stated that MIMS Automobility Moscow 2023 will be held at Moscow Exhibition Center (Expo Center) from August 21 to 24 with the participation of the world's leading parts manufacturers and automakers to showcase their latest products and achievements.

He went on to say that more than 40 leading Iranian automakers and parts manufacturers attended MIMS Automobility Moscow 2022.

Given the certain condition of the Russian auto market and competitive advantages of the Iranian auto and parts manufacturing industry, 12 memoranda of understanding (MoUs), valued at €700 million, were inked last year, he added.

# Vehicle Ownership To Hit 40m by March

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Traffic Police Chief Brigadier Kamal Hadianfar has announced that vehicle ownership in the country will reach 40 million by the end of the Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024).

Speaking to reporters in Tehran, the police chief said that on average, there would be one vehicle per every two Iranians this calendar year.

He further noted that the number of people with driving licenses in Iran had increased to nearly 52 million, more than 80% of which are car driving licenses.

An average of two to three people were killed in car accidents in Iran every single hour last calendar year, said the police chief, adding the country plans to stop manufacturing of low-quality car models including Pride and Peugeot 405 to help reduce the number of road accident fatalities.

# Iran, FAO in Joint Project to Protect Bactrian Camel

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have been involved in a joint project to protect purebred bactrian camel in Iran.

A senior official from Iran's ministry of agriculture said on Saturday that FAO had earmarked funds worth \$350,000 for the bactrian camel protection project in Iran.

Seyyed Reza Alian said that three-year scheme will mostly focus on the endangered animal's habitat in three provinces in northwest Iran. "It has been decided as part of the project that conditions for breeding the animal should be prepared in those provinces with the contribution of large local tribes," said Alian.

He added that the population of purebred bactrian camels in Iran had dropped to 200 in recent years against a population of 200,000 one-humped camels that are scattered in various parts of the country.

The official said the Iranian agriculture ministry is now working on a project to expand the cultivation of halophytes or plants that grow in salty conditions to help boost breeding of camels in the country.



# Capacity of Renewable Power Plants Rises 2% in a Month

TEHRAN (MNA) - The capacity of Iran's renewable power plants has increased by two percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), from its previous month.

As reported, the total capacity of the country's renewable power plants reached 1,042.68 megawatts (MW) by April 20.

The total capacity of the country's wind power plants stood at 354.89 MW, while the solar farms' capacity reached 449.55 MW.

Hydroelectric power plants also reached a capacity of 100.78 MW, while the capacity of biomass power plants stood at 12.5 MW.

Iranian Energy Ministry has put it on the agenda to add 10,000 MW to the capacity of the country's renewable power plants by the end of the current government's administration (August 2025).

Back in January 2022, the Energy Ministry and some of the country's private contractors signed memorandums of understanding (MOU) for cooperation in the construction of new renewable power plants across the country.

In early April, the head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) announced the construction of 110,000 solar power plants with a capacity of five kilowatts (KW) for low-income groups in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21).

Mahmoud Kamani also announced that the tender for the construction of solar power plants with a capacity of 2,200 megawatts, left over from the plan for the

construction of solar power plants with 4,000 megawatts capacity in the past year, will be also held this year.

Regarding the follow-up of the construction of renewable power plants in the new year, the official said that a plan for the construction of renewable power plants was announced by the minister of energy at the beginning of the 13th government, and in 1401 (past Iranian year), the necessary preparations for the implementation of this plan have been followed up and some measures have been taken in this due.

In early February, the official announced that the capacity of Iran's renewable power plants reached 1,020 megawatts (MW) with the 10-MW Pasargad Solar Farm of Damghan coming into operation.

# Capacity of Renewable Power Plants Rises 2% in a Month

TEHRAN (MNA) - The capacity of Iran's renewable power plants has increased by two percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), from its previous month.

As reported, the total capacity of the country's renewable power plants reached 1,042.68 megawatts (MW) by April 20. The total capacity of the country's wind power plants stood at 354.89 MW, while the solar farms' capacity reached 449.55 MW.

Hydroelectric power plants also reached a capacity of 100.78 MW, while the capacity of biomass power plants stood at 12.5 MW.

Iranian Energy Ministry has put it on the agenda to add 10,000 MW to the capacity of the country's renewable power plants by the end of the current government's administration (August 2025).

Back in January 2022, the Energy Ministry and some of the country's private contractors signed memorandums of understanding (MOU) for cooperation in the construction of new renewable power plants across the country.

# Arbitrator in \$32b Gas Dispute Against Iran Dismissed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's vice-president for legal affairs has announced that Laurent Aynès, president of an international tribunal hearing a \$32 billion gas dispute between the UAE-based Crescent Petroleum and National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), has been dismissed from the case.

Mohammad Dehghan called the removal of the arbitrator a great victory for Iran in the case, and said that the change in the arbitration team will have a significant impact on the fair and just review of the case.

"With the removal of the arbitrator, the case, which was based on unfounded allegations of a \$32 billion fine against Iran, is now on the verge of collapse," he said.

The gas supply deal, known as Crescent II, was signed in 2005, under which the NIOC would have transferred gas to Sharjah in the UAE. The contract was marred with corruption, complications from US sanctions and a lack of cooperation from the UAE. Ultimately, Iran terminated the deal, prompting Crescent Petroleum to seek arbitration in the case.

Laurent Aynès presided over the tribunal since 2018 and played a key role in issuing anti-Iranian rulings in the case. Iran had complained to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) that the head arbitrator was not qualified, and the ICC court of arbitration accepted that argument on March 23.

## Two Killed in West Bank As Gaza Attacked by Israel

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israeli forces have shot dead two Palestinians and wounded three others in the occupied West Bank as air raids hit the Gaza Strip for a fifth straight day.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the Israeli attack on Saturday occurred in the Balata refugee camp in the northern West Bank city of Nablus.

Both men – identified as Adnan Wasim Yousef al-Araj, 19, and Saed Jihad Shaker Mashah, 32 – were killed by gunshots to the head, it said. One of the wounded was a woman in her 50s who was shot multiple times. The Israeli army said it was a “counterterrorism” operation targeting operatives who had been planning attacks on soldiers.



## Turkey Red Crescent Head Resigns Following Controversy

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The head of the Turkish Red Crescent resigned, the relief association said, three months after controversy emerged over the selling of tents to a charity in the first days after devastating earthquakes in Turkey.

The magnitude 7.8 quake shook a huge area in southern Turkey in February, causing more than 54,000 deaths in Turkey and Syria. People in the region complained of a slow response by authorities in the first days after the disaster, prompting criticism of the government. President Tayyip Erdogan said on Thursday he had been “saddened” by the Red Crescent selling tents.



## G7 Summit Statement to Target China's Economic Coercion



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) countries are set to discuss concern about China's use of “economic coercion” in its dealings abroad as part of their larger joint statement next week, according to a U.S. official familiar with the discussions.

The statement, a likely component of the overall communique that will be released by leaders during the summit in Hiroshima, Japan, is expected to be paired with a broader written proposal on how the seven advanced economies will work together to counter “economic coercion” from any country.

The main G7 statement is set to include “a section specific to China” with a list of concerns that include “economic coercion and other behavior that we have seen specifically from the [People's Republic of China],” the official said on Friday.

A separate “economic security statement will speak more to tools” used to counter coercive efforts from any countries responsible, including planning and coordination, the person said. In each case, the statements are to be expected go further than prior statements by the G7.

U.S. President Joe Biden has made China a focus of his foreign policy, working to keep the tense and competitive relationship from veering into one of open conflict, including over self-ruled Taiwan.

The G7, which also includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, is closely tied economically to China, the world's biggest exporter and a key market for many of the seven countries' companies.

Last month, China called a statement by the G7 foreign ministers that touched on similar topics “full of arrogance, prejudice against China,” and lodged complaints with this year's G7 host, Japan.

Under Biden's predecessor, President Donald Trump, G7 statements often offered only a cursory mention of issues involving China. The Biden administration has pushed for more direct statements.

The joint statement issued by all the G7 leaders every year is intended to signal that the powerful countries are aligned on a range of political and economic issues.

G7 members will also hold out the prospect of further cooperation with China on areas like climate.

“We're not for decoupling the U.S. and Chinese economy, we are for de-risking, we are for diversifying,” said the U.S. official. “That principle is very unifying.”

Negotiations over the precise language of the leaders' joint declarations are still subject to diplomacy and adjustment before they are released during summit.

The G7 meeting will be a test of how much the members, all rich democracies, can agree on a common approach to China, the world's second largest economy.

The China terms have been a major subject of the talks currently underway by G7 finance leaders in Niigata, Japan, where they have focused on reducing “over-reliance” of their countries' supply chains on Chinese manufacturing, including by partnering with low- and middle-income countries.

“The U.S. wants to get something hard on paper down in terms of agreement and the other countries are interested, but they're not as interested in putting specifics down on paper on these various instruments and economic statecraft tools,” said Josh Lipsky, senior director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center.

## Russia Says Ukraine Used Storm Shadow Missiles From Britain

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's Defense Ministry said on Saturday that Ukrainian aircraft had struck two industrial sites in the Russian-held city of Luhansk in eastern Ukraine with Storm Shadow long-range cruise missiles supplied by Britain.

Reuters could not verify the battlefield reports.

Britain on Thursday became the first country to say it had started supplying Kyiv with long-range cruise missiles, which will allow it to hit Russian troops and supply dumps far behind the front lines as it prepares a major counteroffensive.

British Defence Minister Ben Wallace said the missiles could be used within Ukrainian territory, implying that he had received assurances from Kyiv that they would not be used to attack targets inside Russia's internationally accepted borders.

The Russian ministry said the missiles had hit a plant producing polymers and a



meat-processing factory in Luhansk on Friday.

“Storm Shadow air-to-air missiles supplied to the Kyiv regime by Britain were used for the strike, contrary to London's statements that these weapons would not be used against civilian targets,” the ministry said.

It also said Russia had downed two Ukrainian warplanes - a Su-24 and a MiG-29 - that had launched the missiles.

In its latest bulletin, the ministry also said Russian forces had gained control over another block in the eastern city of Bakhmut, which Moscow has been trying to capture for more than 10 months in an attritional artillery battle.

“The units of the Airborne Forces provided support to the assault units and pinned down the enemy on the flanks,” it said.

The ministry often uses the term “assault units” to denote the Wagner private militia, which has been spearheading the assault on Bakhmut at great cost in casualties.

## Sudan Talks to Resume in Saudi Arabia Amid Heavy Fighting

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Khartoum residents described fierce battles on Saturday with fighters roving the streets and little sign Sudan's warring sides were respecting an agreement to protect civilians ahead of ceasefire talks due to resume in Saudi Arabia.

Fighting has rocked Khartoum and adjoining areas as well as Geneina in the Darfur region since the warring army and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary force agreed a “declaration of principles” on Thursday.

“It was much worse this morning compared to the past two days. You could clearly hear the tanks and the RSF were patrolling the streets more than usual,” said Hani Ahmed, 28.

The conflict that broke out a month ago has killed hundreds of people, sent more than 200,000 into neighbouring states, displaced another 700,000 inside the country, and risks drawing in outside powers and destabilising the region.

Medical charity Medicins Sans Frontieres said displaced people living in a large camp in north Darfur were cutting down to a single meal a day because food aid programmes had been halted by fighting. It said the condition of already malnourished children would likely deteriorate.

Airspace will stay closed except for aid flights until May 31, authorities said.

The two sides have battled through previous truces and have shown no sign of being willing to compromise. Although the RSF promised to uphold Thursday's agreement, the army has not yet commented on it.

Neither side seems able to secure a quick victory, with the army able to call on air power but the RSF dug into residential districts throughout the capital.

“We only see the army in the sky but in terms of face-to-face contact we only see the RSF. They're the ones on the ground,” Ahmed said.

For civilians the conflict has unleashed a nightmare of bombardment, random gunfire, home invasions and looting, amid flickering electricity supply, shortages of water and food, and little chance of medical help with injuries.

## China, Russia Are Increasing Their Military Collaboration

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi expressed concern about Russian and Chinese military cooperation in Asia and said the security situation in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region was indivisible since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking at a meeting of European and Indo-Pacific foreign ministers in Sweden, Hayashi said Russia's war in Ukraine had “shaken the very foundation of the international order” and must face a united response by the international community.

“Otherwise, similar challenges will arise in other regions and the existing order which has underpinned our peace and prosperity could be fundamentally overturned,” Hayashi said.

Japan firmly backs Ukraine in the war but China says it remains neutral while declaring a “no limits” relationship with Moscow and blaming the U.S. and NATO for provoking the conflict. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, in March at the same time as Chinese President Xi Jinping met Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

Hayashi accused Beijing of “continuing and intensifying its unilateral attempts” to change the status quo in the East and South China seas by force and increasing its military activities around Taiwan.

“In addition, China and Russia are strengthening their military collaboration, including joint flights of their bombers and joint naval exercises in the vicinity of Japan,” Hayashi said.

China, which claims most of the South China Sea as well as Japanese-held islands in the East China Sea, says it has the right to defend its sovereignty and development interests.

Hayashi also warned that North Korea was “escalating provocations” in the region by conducting ballistic missile launches “with a frequency and in a manner that are unprecedented.”

He joined dozens of ministers from the European Union and the Indo-Pacific region for the meeting just north of the Swedish capital. China was not invited to the talks.

“Since the aggression of Russia to Ukraine, the security situation here in Europe and the security situation in the Pacific are not separable. So this is very important and this is very meaningful that the European ministers and also the ministers from the Pacific area are jointly discussing about those issues here in Stockholm,” Hayashi told reporters as he arrived.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said the whole world was affected by the war in Ukraine, adding to global challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.



## India's Opposition Congress Set For Big Win in Karnataka State

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's main opposition Congress party was set to win elections in the southern state of Karnataka, emphatically defeating the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in a big boost to its prospects ahead of national elections due next year.

The election is the first of five crucial state polls this year that are seen as setting the tone for parliamentary elections due in April and May 2024.

It is also the first big electoral face-off between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP and Congress since Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was convicted of defamation in March and lost his parliament seat.

Karnataka, which was ruled by the BJP, voted on Wednesday and votes were counted on Saturday. Congress is set to win 136 seats against 64 for the BJP in the 224-member legislature, the Election Commission website showed.

The Congress party's fortunes had shrunk to a historical low since losing power at the national level to the BJP in 2014. Before Saturday it had won only one of 24 state or federal territory elections since 2019, when Modi swept national elections for a second term.

In contrast, the BJP won 15 states or federal territories either on its own or in alliance with regional parties.

The defeat in Karnataka would be a rare blow for the BJP considering Modi remains highly popular after nine years in power and is favorite to win a third term nationally in 2024.

Ecstatic Congress members burst firecrackers, danced to the beat of drums and distributed sweets at the party headquarters in New Delhi, and in Bengaluru, the global tech hub which is the capital city of Karnataka.

“(The) Congress party stood with the poor in Karnataka, we fought on the issues of the poor,” Gandhi told reporters.

“I feel happiest about the fact that we didn't fight this fight with hate or wrong words. We fought this fight with love, with an open heart, and the people of Karnataka showed that this country likes love,” he said.

“The markets of hate have been shut in Karnataka, the shops of love have opened.” Karnataka is home to about 65 million people and is considered the BJP's gateway to southern India, as the party has struggled to win elections elsewhere in the region.



## Toxic Chemicals in the Air May Raise Risk of Rheumatoid Arthritis

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Toxic chemicals that develop from car exhaust, smoking and backyard grilling might increase your risk of developing the autoimmune disease rheumatoid arthritis, a new study suggests.

These chemicals are called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). They form as coal, oil, gas, wood or tobacco burn. Flame grilling of meat and other foods also contribute to PAH formation, the researchers said.

"While more studies are needed, the findings suggest that polyaromatic hydrocarbons may be a significant contributor to rheumatoid arthritis," said lead researcher Chris D'Adamo, director of the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "People at risk of rheumatoid arthritis should be cautious of polyaromatic hydrocarbons and consider minimizing modifiable sources of exposure."

Blood and urine samples from nearly 22,000 adults revealed those with the highest PAH levels had the highest risk of rheumatoid arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune and inflammatory disease that primarily affects the joints, causing tissue damage and long-lasting pain. Joints may become deformed, and people with the disease may be unsteady on their feet. Women develop rheumatoid arthritis more often than men. The cause isn't known, but is thought to involve genes, sex and age, and environmental factors, such as smoking, nutrition and lifestyle.

D'Adamo said this study can't prove that PAHs cause rheumatoid arthritis, only that there appears to be an association.

"While the findings are suggestive of an important relationship, causality cannot be established in a study like this," D'Adamo said.

He also pointed out that the absolute risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis is relatively low because the prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis is fairly low.

PAHs, however, are rife in the environment. PAH levels are higher in smokers. Other sources include indoor environments, motor vehicle exhaust, natural gas, smoke from wood or coal-burning fires, fumes from asphalt roads, and consumption of grilled or charred foods, the study authors noted.

PAH levels may be higher among the poor because poverty generally goes along with poorer indoor air



quality. Also, many poor people live in urban areas near major roadways or in high-traffic areas and are at a higher risk of exposure. Poorer people are also more likely to smoke, researchers have found.

Smoking is a known risk factor for rheumatoid arthritis, and PAH level accounted for about 90% of the association between smoking and rheumatoid arthritis, according to the report.

D'Adamo advises limiting exposure to PAHs, if you can. Avoid cigarette smoke, including second- and third-hand smoke, and don't eat burned foods, he said.

Marinating food going on the grill with spices and herbs reduces the formation of PAHs and other harmful toxicants, he noted.

"Also, minimize using a wood-burning fireplace and make sure to clean the chimney if burning fires, and limit exposure to areas with high vehicle exhaust when possible," D'Adamo added.

For the study, the researchers used data from the 2007 to 2016 U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey on nearly 22,000 adults. More than 1,400 had rheumatoid arthritis.

Blood and urine samples were assessed to measure the amount of PAH and other chemicals in the body.

The odds of developing rheumatoid arthritis were greatest among the 25% of people with the highest PAH levels, regardless of whether they were former or current smokers.

After taking into account dietary fiber, physical activity, smoking, income, education, age, sex and weight, one PAH -- namely 1-hydroxynaphthalene -- was strongly linked with higher odds (80%) of developing rheumatoid arthritis.

Smoking on its own, however, was not associated with a higher risk for rheumatoid arthritis after accounting for levels of PAH, the researchers noted.

Dr. Diane Horowitz, director of the Rheumatoid Arthritis Center at Northwell Health in Great Neck, N.Y., called the findings "interesting."

## Pancreatic Cancer Vaccine May Slow Return of Disease

LONDON (Dispatches) - A gene-targeted personalized vaccine may delay the return of pancreatic cancer according to a small, but promising, trial.

The mRNA vaccine, which was tailored to the genetic makeup of each patient's tumor, worked in half of those who received it during 18 months of follow-up, researchers reported Wednesday in the journal Nature.

Scientists at BioNTech (known for developing a COVID-19 vaccine with Pfizer during the pandemic) and Genentech created the novel vaccine.

Experts reacted to the news with cautious hope. "It's relatively early days," Dr. Patrick Ott, of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, told the New York Times.

"This is the first demonstrable success -- and I will call it a success, despite the preliminary nature of the study -- of an mRNA vaccine in pancreatic cancer," Dr. Anirban Maitra, a specialist in the disease at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, told the Times. "By that standard, it's a milestone."

The idea for the study came together at a meeting of cancer scientists in Mainz, Germany, several years ago. They tested the vaccine in a type of pancreatic cancer that often returns, even in patients whose tumors are removed, the Times reported.

The vaccine worked in about half of the 16 patients, triggering an immune response that may explain why these patients did not relapse during the study period.

In the study, BioNTech scientists used the tumors' genetic data to create personalized vaccines. The goal of the vaccine was to teach the patients' immune systems to attack the tumors.

Patients in the study were still treated with chemotherapy and a medication to keep the immune system on track, so it's possible the vaccine was not the only reason the tumors didn't return, the Times reported.

Patients received their vaccines about nine weeks after their tumors were removed. That is now possible after only six weeks, with the goal of providing future patients with the vaccine in four weeks, BioNTech CEO Dr. Ugur Sahin told the Times.

Still, the vaccine is costly at \$100,000 a dose, the Times reported.

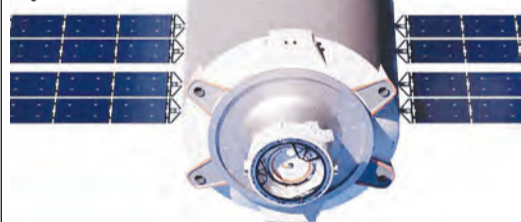
"Cost is a major barrier for these types of vaccines to be more broadly utilized," Dr. Neeha Zaidi, a pancreatic cancer specialist at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, told the Times. Also, the vaccine was not effective in about half of patients, who experienced a relapse after 13 months.

But by creating vaccines that targeted mutated proteins found only on cancer cells, researchers may have realized a breakthrough.

"Just establishing the proof of concept that vaccines in cancer can actually do something after, I don't know, thirty years of failure, is probably not a bad thing," Dr. Ira Mellman, vice president of cancer immunology at Genentech, told the Times. "We'll start with that."



## SpaceX to Launch First Commercial Space Station By Mid-2025



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - SpaceX confirmed it signed a contract to launch the world's first commercial space station.

The company also will perform manned space flights shortly after launching the station into orbit "no later than August 2025," SpaceX said in a statement.

The Haven-1 space station is being built by Vast, a private aerospace company based in Long Beach, Calif. Its "mission is to contribute to a future where billions of people are living and thriving in space -- a future in which the human population and our resources expand far beyond our current imagination."

Announcing the Haven-1 and Vast-1 missions to low-Earth orbit.

Vast is solely funded by its billionaire founder and CEO Jed McCaleb.

SpaceX will use its Falcon 9 rocket to carry the Haven-1 station into orbit.

Manned crews will then use the company's Dragon reusable spacecraft to get to the space station, docking for up to 30 days while in orbit.

Vast plans for the initial module to become part of a larger 100-meter-long multi-module spinning space station with artificial gravity.

SpaceX confirmed it also will provide crew training, as well as spacesuit and spacecraft ingress and egress exercises. SpaceX also will conduct mission simulations, as part of the agreement with Vast.

"A commercial rocket launching a commercial spacecraft with commercial astronauts to a commercial space station is the future of low-Earth orbit, and with Vast we're taking another step toward making that future a reality," SpaceX Senior Vice President of Commercial Business Tom Ochinerro said in a statement.

## Monkeypox No Longer Global Health Emergency

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization announced on Thursday that mpox, formerly monkeypox, is no longer a global health emergency.

The announcement was made after the WHO's fifth meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on Wednesday regarding the multi-country outbreak of the disease.

The committee confirmed that progress has been made in the global response to the outbreak, including in the United States. The committee said there was a significant decline in the number of reported cases compared with the previous reporting period.

"In total, more than 87,000 cases and 140 deaths have been reported to WHO, from 111 countries," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in opening comments to the committee on Wednesday.

"Due to global mobilization and the rapid response of most countries, we now see steady progress in controlling this outbreak. There were almost 90% fewer cases reported in the last three months, compared with the previous three months."



The committee acknowledged remaining uncertainties about the disease, regarding modes of transmission in some countries, poor quality of some reported data, and continued lack of effective countermeasures

in the African countries.

The body added that efforts to control the spread of mpox were done largely in the absence of outside funding support. They noted it would be difficult to eliminate mpox without additional support.

In March, U.S. public health officials called for high-risk individuals who haven't been vaccinated for mpox to do so before a potential resurgence of the virus in the coming months.

Health officials worried that a new surge could be worse than last year, federal modeling has found, but only about 23% of those at high risk for the virus have received vaccines, according to a report released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ghebreyesus said while stigma had been a driving concern in managing the epidemic and continues to hamper access to care, the feared backlash against the most affected communities has largely not materialized.

## Spain Approves Emergency Measures to Battle Crippling Drought

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spain's cabinet approved measures worth more than two billion euros to alleviate the impact of a prolonged drought that has hit its key agricultural sector.

The country's water reserves are on average below 50 percent of capacity, while levels have fallen to roughly 25 percent in the two worst-hit areas -- Andalusia in the south and Catalonia in the northeast.

The bulk of the money, 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion), will be earmarked to build new infrastructure, such as desalination plants, to boost the amount of available water, the government said in a statement.

Another 784 million euros will be used to help farmers and ranchers cope with the lack of precipitation which has decimated crops and driven up the cost of livestock feed.

"Spain is used to facing periods of drought, but due to climate change they have become much more frequent and intense and we must prepare ourselves," Spain's Minister for Ecological Transition, Teresa Ribera, told a news conference

The announcement of the aid package comes ahead of regional and local elections on May 28 and what promises to be closely fought national elections at the end of the year.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's government has already urged Brussels to activate the bloc's agriculture crisis reserve to help farmers cope with the exceptional drought

Spain has recorded its driest start of the year since such records began in 1961, with the country receiving less than half the normal amount of rain during the first four months of 2023, according to national weather agency AEMET.

## James Webb Telescope Unveils Complex Rings Around Young Star



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Researchers using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope observed multiple debris rings surrounding a young star.

The James Webb Telescope's Mid-Infrared Instrument, which is designed to capture very long wavelengths of light, found three nested belts surrounding the Fomalhaut star, out to a distance of up to 14 billion miles, NASA said.

Observations by NASA's Infrared Astronomical Satellite first discovered Fomalhaut's dust ring, the first asteroid belt seen outside of our solar system in 1983 with Webb, the Hubble Space Telescope and the Atacama Large Millimeter/sub-millimeter Array capturing more detailed images of the outside of the belt.

The latest infrared imagery revealed its inner belts for the first time.

"I would describe Fomalhaut as the archetype of debris disks found elsewhere in our galaxy because it has components similar to those we have in our own planetary system" said study lead author Andras Gaspar of the University of Arizona. "By looking at the patterns in these rings, we can actually start to make a little sketch of what a planetary system ought to look like -- If we could actually take a deep enough picture to see the suspected planets."

Researchers believe the belts are partially shaped by the gravitational pull of planets that cannot yet be observed. The James Webb Space Telescope was able to observe the inner belts around the star by observing infrared light.

"I think it's not a very big leap to say there's probably a really interesting planetary system around the star," said team member Schuyler Wolff.

## Emirates Group Reports Record \$3b Annual Profit

DUBAI (Dispatches) - Dubai's Emirates Group said financial year 2022-23 had been its most profitable so far, reporting an annual profit of 10.9 billion dirhams (\$3 billion) and a group revenue increase of 81% to \$33 billion. Emirates airline, which along with airport services business data makes up Emirates Group, made a \$2.9 billion profit. The state-owned carrier had posted an annual loss of \$1.1 billion for 2021-22, following a \$5.5 billion loss the year before that.

The airline had made a "full recovery" since the hit to demand caused by the pandemic, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said.



## Risk of U.S. Default Adds to Woes Facing Slowing Global Economy

NIIGATA (Dispatches) - The risk of a U.S. default is adding to problems facing the slowing global economy, with rising interest rates and high debt levels already choking back investments needed to fuel higher output, World Bank President David Malpass said.

Group of Seven (G7) finance officials meeting in Japan discussed the "very high importance" of raising the U.S. debt limit and averting the negative repercussions of a potential default on U.S. government debt for the first time ever.

"Clearly, distress in the world's biggest economy would be negative for everyone," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the G7 meeting. "The repercussions would be bad to not get it done."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Friday reiterated that failure by Congress to raise the \$31.4 trillion debt limit would result in economic and financial catastrophe, and urged the Republican-controlled House of Representatives to agree to lift the federal debt limit.

Malpass said there had been discussion during the G7 meetings about the need to boost productivity and growth, and also deal with a high debt overhang facing a growing number of countries.

Global growth was slated to fall below 2% in 2023, and could stay low for several years, he said. One of the big challenges was that advanced economies had taken on so much debt that it would take a lot of capital to service it, leaving too little investment for developing countries, he said.

"And that means a prolonged period of slow growth. That's a big worry, and especially for people in poorer countries," he said. "The world's in a stressful spot, but I think the financial systems are holding up. The big question is growth, how do you get more growth and productivity?"

Malpass said it was urgent to move forward with restructuring the debts of countries that had asked for help, and welcomed "some progress" on Ghana, the fourth country to seek relief under the Group of 20 Common Framework. Reuters reported on Thursday that Ghana's official creditors are poised to grant financing assurances and form a committee co-chaired by France and China, key steps for the nation to secure a \$3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

He said it was frustrating to see the slow pace of progress on the overall debt restructuring front, noting how difficult it was for countries to attract investment until they had agreements in place to make their debt more sustainable.

Malpass welcomed progress made during the first two meetings of a new Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable that includes China, the world's largest sovereign creditor, and private sector creditors. A third meeting was now planned in June, he said.

"To actually get to these debt reductions is so important ... for poor countries that have hit the wall in terms of unsustainable debt. It's important to get it done as soon as possible."

Malpass expressed concern about a new deal being finalized by Suriname's government and international bondholders to restructure nearly \$600 million in debt.

## UK Economy Grows in Q1

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's economy grew by 0.1% in the first three months of 2023, a period that was once expected to be part of a long recession, but an unexpectedly sharp 0.3% drop in March underscored how fragile its recovery remains.

Economists polled by Reuters had mostly forecast 0.1% quarterly growth, but they had expected output to hold steady in the final month of the quarter.

"The fall in March was driven by widespread decreases across the services sector," said Darren Morgan, from the Office for National Statistics.

"Despite the launch of new number plates, car sales were low by historic standards - continuing the trend seen since the start of the pandemic - with warehousing, distribution and retail also having a poor month."

Widespread industrial action also weighed on economic activity in the quarter, the ONS said.

Britain's economy remained 0.5% smaller than in the fourth quarter of 2019, shortly before the coronavirus pandemic - a weaker rebound than any other major advanced economy.

"With the key services side of the economy continuing to slow in the face of higher borrowing costs and rising prices, it still feels like we're walking through treacle," said Tom Stevenson, personal investing director at Fidelity International.

"With inflation still in double digits, it feels depressingly like a re-run of 1970s stagflation."

Output in March was only 0.1% higher than in February 2020, the last full pre-pandemic month.

"A weaker economy in March underscores its fragility despite a fall in wholesale energy prices, improving supply chain conditions,

and consumer confidence that has also recovered from multi-year lows," KPMG economist Yael Selfin said.

"While recession is probably no longer on the cards, vulnerabilities resulting from higher borrowing costs and tighter credit are likely to dampen business and household activity this year."

The Bank of England forecast on Thursday that Britain's economy would grow 0.25% in 2023 as a whole - a weak expansion but an upgrade on its previous prediction of a 0.5% contraction.

Britain's inflation rate topped 10% in March - double the level in the United States and higher than the euro zone's too - and it is also struggling with a tight labor market, a string of interest rate hikes and after-effects of Brexit.



## Turkish Airlines Set to Order 600 Aircraft

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkish Airlines will order a total of 600 new aircraft in June and they will be delivered within ten years, company chairman Ahmet Bolat said.

Such an order, if confirmed, would be the largest in the industry's history by a single airline, eclipsing a record order by Air India for 470 Airbus and Boeing planes in December, but his comments took some industry sources and analysts by surprise.

Speaking weeks before Turkey is due to host airline leaders from the International Air Transport Association, Bolat said the order would consist of 400 narrow-body aircraft and 200 wide-bodies, adding the fleet would increase to 810 aircraft by 2033.

"During the IATA we are going to announce orders. With one of the big manufacturers, we are almost finishing our discussions. We are going to order (a total of) around 600 aircraft," Bolat told reporters at a press meeting for the launch of the company's renewed inflight dining concept.

IATA's annual summit, grouping some 280 airlines, will be held in Istanbul on June 4-6.

Bolat said that they were close to a deal with Boeing for part of the order but did not give further details. Boeing declined to comment.

Turkish Airlines could hand an order for the rest of the new aircraft "to the other manufacturer" at the next European air show in June, Bolat added in an apparent reference to Airbus, Boeing's European rival. Airbus declined to comment.

## India's April Retail Inflation Eases to 18-Month Low

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's annual retail inflation eased to 18-month low in April, staying well below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) upper tolerance limit for the second consecutive month, as food prices eased.

Annual retail inflation eased to 4.7% in April from 5.66% in the previous month, government data showed on Friday. This was the lowest reading since October 2021, when it hit 4.48%, and also lower than Reuters' forecast of 4.80%.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) targets an inflation range of 2%-6%.

"This (April inflation number) gives me and my colleagues in the RBI reasonable amount of confidence, I would say good amount of confidence, that the monetary policy is on the right track," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said at an event in Mumbai after the data was released.

Food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the overall consumer price basket, moderated further to 3.84% compared with 4.79% in the previous month.

"A lack of flare-up of food inflation, gradual moderation in core inflation, and strong support from a favorable base effect in case of fuel inflation has played a key role," Mumbai-based Vivek Kumar, economist at Quanteco Research, said.

Food inflation was the lowest since a November 2021 reading of 1.87%.

Core inflation, which has been a major concern for policy makers for months, continued to be below 6% for second consecutive month. According to three economists' estimates, core inflation was at 5.2% in April, compared with between 5.75% and 5.78% in March.

The Indian government does not release core inflation figures.

The price of vegetables fell 6.5%, while edible oil fell 12.33%, offsetting a sharp 13.67% rise in cereal prices and an 8.85% rise in milk prices.

Most economists expect price inflation to remain well below 6% in the coming months, even though it is expected to rise from April levels.

"With inflation risks easing, we expect MPC to remain on a 'pause' at least till the end of CY2023," said Garima Kapoor, an economist at Elara Capital.

Last month, the RBI surprised markets by holding its key repo rate steady after six consecutive hikes and economists expect it to remain on hold for the rest of the year, in its bid to support the economic recovery in Asia's third-largest economy.

## U.S. Consumer Sentiment Plummet to Six-Month Low

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. consumer sentiment slumped to a six-month low in May on worries that political haggling over raising the federal government's borrowing cap could trigger a recession.

The University of Michigan's survey on Friday also showed consumers' long-term inflation expectations jumping this month to their highest reading since 2011, bad news for the Federal Reserve after it signaled last week that it could pause the U.S. central bank's fastest monetary policy tightening cycle since the 1980s.

"This report has a bit of a stagflationary feel about it," said Conrad DeQuadros, senior economic advisor at Brea Capital in New York. "This increase in inflation expectations is likely to add to a spirited discussion about whether to hold or hike again at the June 14 meeting."

The survey's preliminary reading on the overall index of consumer sentiment came in at 57.7 this month, the lowest reading since last November and down from 63.5 in April.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast a preliminary reading of 63.0. The survey's current economic conditions index fell to 64.5 from 68.2 in April. Its measure of consumer expectations dropped to 53.4 from 60.5 in the prior month.

Surveys of Consumers Director Joanne Hsu partially attributed the deterioration in sentiment to the debacle in Washington and warned that "if policymakers fail to resolve the debt ceiling crisis, these dismal views over the economy will exacerbate the dire economic consequences of default."

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office warned on Friday that the nation faced a "significant risk" of defaulting on payment obligations within the first two weeks of June without a debt ceiling increase.

Stocks on Wall Street were trading lower. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices fell.

Some economists cautioned against reading too much into the plunge in sentiment and jump in long-term inflation expectations, arguing that there was no strong correlation with consumer spending.

"We've seen consumer sentiment sink often since COVID scrambled the economy, but consumer spending has risen and now maintains a healthy level," said Robert Frick, corporate economist with Navy Federal Credit Union in Vienna, Virginia.

"As for inflation, everyone is poor at predicting it long term, including consumers, and inflation expectations have little effect on spending decisions anyway."

The survey's reading of one-year inflation expectations dipped to 4.5% this month after vaulting to 4.6% in April. Its five-year inflation outlook rose to 3.2%, the highest reading since 2011, from 3.0% last month.

## Zambia's President Defends Economic Diplomacy to Escape Debt



PARIS (Dispatches) - Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema said his copper-rich country needs to forge diverse economic partnerships worldwide to extract itself from a debt burden he described as a "python around our necks."

The African nation in 2020 became the first on the continent to default on its foreign debt - estimated at \$17.3 billion - since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Zambia has since sought help to restructure its debt through a G20 mechanism, which is co-chaired by Paris and Beijing, but implementation has been slow.

The United States has accused Zambia's biggest creditor China, which according to financial researchers is owed \$6.6 billion, of dragging its feet.

The debt is "like a python around our necks, ribs and legs," Hichilema said in an interview with Agence France-Presse in Paris after meeting President Emmanuel Macron for talks on Wednesday.

We need to "close this long overdue debt re-structuring, put it to bed and release resources and time and attention to the development side of our agenda," he said.

Since the businessman-turned-politician's election in 2021, the country has worked towards restoring relations with donors.

Western countries have hailed good governance and progress on reforms under his presidency, seeing in the nation a promising partner on a continent where China, Russia and Turkey are seeking to advance their influence.

But Hichilema refused to align himself with any side. "It is not an issue of polarisation that you're with China or against China, you're with America or against America," he said.

"That sort of argument belongs to the past. The world will be more progressive when we work with each other."

## World War III Wins Award At Vietnam Film Festival

TEHRAN (IP) - World War III (2022), directed by Houman Seyyedi, won the Special Jury Prize and the Best Actor of the Vietnam Film Festival.

The Vietnam Danang Asian Film Festival (DANAFF), held from May 9 to 13, 2023, is organized by the Vietnam Film Development Association (VFDA). World War III experienced its 36th international participation in DANAFF and its 18th international award.

Mohsen Tanabandeh, the Iranian best actor award winner in DANNAF, received his fifth international award. After its successful participation in Venice International Film Festival 2022 and winning two awards in the Horizons section for best film and actor, World War III was also successful in the 35th Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) 2022, The 8th annual Asian World Film Festival (AWFF) in Los Angeles 2022, and the Stockholm Film Festival 2022 where it won the international film critics award, in Sweden.



## Europe's Gas Prices Slide on Swollen Inventories

LONDON (Dispatches) - Europe has made a relatively slow start to rebuilding gas inventories but stocks were so high at the end of last winter that storage sites are still on course to be full well before summer ends, putting downward pressure on prices.

Stocks in the European Union and the United Kingdom increased by +73 terawatt-hours between March 31 and May 9, according to data compiled by Gas Infrastructure Europe ("Aggregated gas storage inventory", May 11).

The rate of accumulation was far below the +119 TWh added last year, when the region was racing to fill storage following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and below the prior 10-year seasonal average of +81 TWh.

But the record carry over from winter 2022/23 ensured stocks had reached 707 TWh on May 9, the second-highest on record for the time of year and +274 TWh (+63% or +1.99 standard deviations) above the 10-year average.

Based on seasonal movements over the last decade, inventories are projected to hit 1,239 TWh before the refill season ends, with a likely range from 1,046 TWh to 1,367 TWh.

The central projection has not changed much since the refill season started on April 1, despite the slower than average accumulation of stocks.

But total storage capacity is estimated at around 1,138 TWh, which means most refill trajectories are physically impossible.

Storage sites were 55.7% full at the end of the winter season on March 31, a record for the time of year, and that had already risen to 62.7% by May 9, still the second-highest on record.

Inventories will have to accumulate much more slowly than average throughout the rest of the summer to ensure space does not run out before winter arrives.

Front-month futures prices have already halved to below 35 euros (\$38.53) per megawatt-hour from 77 euros at the start of the year to encourage more consumption, divert LNG cargoes to Asia and slow the stock build.



Prices for deliveries in July 2023 are trading 23 euros below January 2024, with the discount widening from just 4 euros at the start of the year, to stimulate use by energy-intensive industries this summer.

Given the limits on storage capacity, supplies could still be tight in December 2023 and January 2024 if temperatures are colder-than-normal requiring high prices to restrain use.

For now, though, prices are falling as the market tries to cope with too much gas and insufficient demand.

## Marxism Is Not an...

FROM PAGE 1

Essentially I should tell that Marxists divide the world into two groups and say the first group is exploiter and the second one is the exploited and therefore history in all of the past periods has been nothing but class struggle



between the exploiters and exploited people, it means, economic interests of some people necessitates to remain in the same stage and are opposed to the progress of production tools (ruling exploiter group) and one group wants growth and progress of production tools and getting rid of the current condition (the exploited group) and this leads to repeated conflicts and struggles which leads to a new system (new society) where beside production tools, economic, culture, traditions and religious interests and thought, in one word, change comparing to the previous society; and after a while, again this new system changes its path after fight, war and bloodshed which it itself has been the main factor behind it and it converts into a new system in the form and not in the content.

Regressive and reactionary trend of these transformations are very obvious in the underdeveloped countries comparing to the developed ones. The economy which is fatherly run is a consumerist one and consumption economy has no tendency towards innovation and creativity in developing production tools. With this definition, one can unequivocally say that Marxism is not an economic school and emitted socialism from it leads to a fatherly view to the consumption economy, and modernism in this thought is the least.

Today most of Marxist socialists believe socialism has failed and believe Marxism is a social doctrine, a worldview, an ideology, a philosophical school which was found in the late 19th Century by Carl Marx, the German philosopher, economist, historian, sociologist and political theorist.

Base of Marxism as it has been mentioned in the Communism manifest has been laid on history of societies and history of class struggle and in today's world there exists two classes of Proletariat and Bourgeoisie which are in clash to overcome each other and make these two histories and as I said, for years it induces replacement behavior

The right view and approach to a school-based economy even in the framework of ethical school of Islam is a view to free market and to some extent towards reasonable distribution of wealth. People should enjoy having the talent, understanding and environmental preparation and they themselves provoke production based on the demand and supply and to push the government out of the economy.

John Maynard Keynes, the English economist and philosopher, describes the view on the market as distribution of wealth from up to down and believes growth in any geography looks at big enterprises and encourages the governments to support industry and agriculture, services and leaders of economy and unlike him, Friedrich August von Hayek, who is considered as the founder of Austrian economy does not believe in distribution of wealth from up to down. Hayek believes distribution of wealth from up to down increases the Gini coefficient and decreases the volume of capability in producing jobs and both are liberal with two different views and these two views have set the base of the economies of West and East for their one-hundred year challenges.

We have to support the big enterprises for creating fast growth but in a ten-year plan range, the path for supporting should be directed by at least 10% per year towards supporting the small enterprises and lower classes of the society. We should stop banking chaos and distribution of money and instead of increasing salaries, goods are distributed and distribution of goods via the government should be stopped and it should be handed over to the enterprises which will be a pretext for encouraging them to production, and let the entrepreneurship and employership is formed and organized in order to increase the output and productivity.

If the production is the yardstick for growth, we should save work from the damages of rebellions. The employer should have this power to go through good and bad of his work. I think it went too much. I apologize for prolonging it and of course I will continue this topic later.

## Chocolate Giants in Pay Fail for Ghana Farmers



LONDON (Dispatches) - The world's biggest chocolate makers are failing on promises to improve pay for farmers in major cocoa producer Ghana despite strong profits, charity Oxfam said in a report.

It said earnings for US companies Hershey, Mars and Mondelez in addition to Italy's Ferrero and Swiss peers Lindt & Spruengli and Nestle had increased since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, a period when inflation has soared.

At the same time, an Oxfam survey of more than 400 cocoa farmers in Ghana -- the second-largest global producer of the commodity -- found their net incomes had fallen by an average of 16 percent since the same period.

For women, the average drop was 22 percent, it added. "There's big money in chocolate -- but definitely not for farmers," said Oxfam International's interim executive director, Amitabh Behar.

"Cocoa farmers work extremely hard, under gruelling conditions, yet can't always feed their families."

The charity claimed that up to 90 percent of Ghanaian cocoa farmers do not earn a living income, "meaning they cannot afford enough food or other basics such as clothing, housing and medical care."

"Many of the 800,000 farmers in the country survive on just \$2 a day," it added.

Responding, Nestle said that while it "cannot influence the farm-gate prices due to the cocoa-trade structure in Ghana" the company does "everything we can to help cocoa-farming families close the living income gap".

It told AFP that it strives also to help improve incomes for farmers in Ivory Coast, the world's biggest producer of cocoa.

Ivory Coast and Ghana, both situated in West Africa, together produce about two-thirds of the world's cocoa.

Ferrero said farmers in the countries receive a cash premium on top of the commercial price for cocoa.

"We have been among the first companies to fully support the Living Income Differential (LID)," it said in a statement.

Ivory Coast and Ghana introduced the LID in 2019 to fight poverty among cocoa farmers in the global \$130-billion chocolate market.

But their trade boards say the scheme is being undercut by buyers who depress the price of another premium based on bean quality.

Mars, which said it was the first major manufacturer to publicly support the LID, added that its direct financial support to cocoa farmers goes beyond the poverty-fighting initiative.

"We also work on diverse initiatives... with women and their families in cocoa growing communities to improve their livelihoods."

A Lindt & Spruengli spokesperson said its support also extended beyond LID to help improve farmers' earnings.

## Can Calorie Restriction Delay Chronic Disease and Aging?

LONDON (Dispatches) - With all the fountain of youth promises, is cutting calories to slow the aging process just one more hype? Research suggests it's more than just a trend — with studies finding first in animals, and now in humans, the potential for the reduction of chronic inflammation and chronic disease as we age by restricting calories. This article explores the science behind the hype, as well as the potential benefits and drawbacks of cutting calories.

Animal studies since 1935 have indicated that when calories are cut, lab animals live longer.

Aging is not a disease but increases inflammation, the risk of developing chronic diseases, and overall frailty.

Moderate calorie restriction in human subjects could have the same benefits as found in animal studies, namely a decrease in chronic disease and an increased lifespan.

The National Institute on Aging will continue to study the promising effects of moderate calorie reduction on chronic inflammation, chronic disease, and slowing of the aging process in humans.

While not a disease process, aging creates a significant risk of developing inflammation, chronic disease, and frailty. Although the exact mechanism has not been isolated, researchers are looking at the geroscience involved in aging, drilling down to the genetic, molecular, and cellular factors involved. The National Institute on Aging is funding more calorie restriction studies focusing on genetic, molecular, and cellular responses to decreasing our calories as we age.

So far, calorie restriction has been shown to improve the following health outcomes:

Improved memory, improved cognition, reduced inflammation, lower mortality rates from heart disease and cancer, longer lifespan, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Calorie restriction and aging have been areas of interest since 1935. Researchers at Cornell University over 85 years ago noted that lab rodents lived up to 33% longer when fed fewer calories. Since this early study, interest in calorie reduction and its effect on life span has only increased.

One review of the effects of caloric restriction on aging concludes that caloric restriction has beneficial effects not only on longevity in humans but also protects against the development of cancer and certain chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease and hypertension. The reviewers cited evidence of those living in Okinawa, Japan who eat fewer calories than those who live on the mainland of Japan and have very low mortality rates from heart disease or cancer.

A study of 50 normal to overweight females with a mean age of 60.5 years was conducted in Germany over a 3-month period with one group adhering to a 30% calorie restriction, one group increasing unsaturated fat consumption by 20% with calorie reduction, and a control group making no changes in their diets. It was found that calorie restriction resulted in much improved verbal memory scores. This was attributed to decreased plasma levels of insulin and elevated sensitive C-reactive protein, an indicator of inflammation. What is the evidence that calorie restriction can improve your longevity? Looking at the cellular level, there is evidence that calorie restriction impacts your immune system.

The thymus gland, part of the immune system, shrinks with age. More importantly, the thymus gland decreases its production of T cells as it shrinks, which decreases your body's ability to fight infections and potentially cancerous cells. Some studies in animals and humans have shown that after significant caloric restrictions, the thymus gland has increased in some subjects, and showed evidence of new T cell production.

In addition, researchers found that with calorie restriction, a gene (PLA2G7) was suppressed in immune cells, which may also result in an improvement in thymus gland function. When researchers decreased PLA2G7 in lab mice, they found the mice to have less fat mass and lower levels of inflammation-producing substances. What does this mean with respect to the conditions that occur as we age?

Given the data from studies on humans and mice, there is evidence that calorie restriction, which suppresses PLA2G7 gene production, may improve the immune system and decrease inflammation in humans. This decreases your likelihood of developing chronic disease and potentially increases your lifespan.

Reducing calories, while maintaining sufficient levels of essential nutrients is a difficult balancing act. However, it has been asserted that caloric restriction can increase the human lifespan by 1 to 5 years. There is no agreement as to what percentage of calories should be restricted.

### U.S. Failed to...

FROM PAGE 1

The flotilla traveled some 63,000 kilometers and crossed the equator four times. It will reach Bandar Abbas by traveling an additional 2,000 kilometers.

On February 3, 2023, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) identified Dena and Makran warships as Iranian property for sanctions related to a wider effort to target the country's drone industry. Elsewhere in his interview, the Navy commander said France claimed that the Iranian warships had entered its waters.

However, he added, the French became speechless when the flotilla reminded them of their own shipping rules.

"The French have some islands in the Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately, they were not aware of their own regulations and caused disturbances for us, to which we responded with the language of the law," he explained.

"The recent incident was a big blow to the French in the field of international shipping, and they never talked about it."

### U.S. Has Committed...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's legendary anti-terror commander General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020. He was highly revered across the Middle East because of his key role in fighting the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

Gharibabadi also noted that the international community should be encouraged to take a position on the U.S. violation of the nations' rights, which are unprecedented throughout history.

Touching on the issue of sanctions, the official said the U.S. bans have affected the rights of all Iranian people and victimized the nation.

Back in May 2018, the U.S. began to unilaterally impose the "toughest ever" sanctions against Iran after the former president left the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

## Osorio Stuns Garcia At Italian Open

ROME (Dispatches) - Caroline Garcia became the latest big hitter to be dumped out of the Italian Open after the world number four lost 6-4, 6-4 to outsider Camila Osorio. On a soaking day in Rome, qualifier Osorio almost broke down in tears after her shock straight sets victory over Garcia, a two-time doubles winner at the French Open. A career-best win for world number 100 Osorio puts her in the last 16 of a WTA 1000 event for the first time in her career. She will face either Beatriz Haddad Maia or Magda Linette in the next round.

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## Real Madrid Lose \$440m Sponsorship Battle With Abu Dhabi Fund

MADRID (Dispatches) - Spanish soccer's Real Madrid have lost a \$440 million court battle with Abu Dhabi sovereign investor Mubadala over the proposed sponsorship of its stadium in Madrid, sources with knowledge of the case told Reuters. Real Madrid had claimed 400 million euros (\$440 million) from Mubadala because it said the Abu Dhabi sovereign investor failed to honor a sponsorship deal under which it would acquire rights to name the Santiago Bernabeu stadium for 20 years.

## Lakers Topple Warriors to Advance, Heat Reach East Finals

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Los Angeles Lakers ran defending champions Golden State out of the NBA playoffs in dominant style, beating the Warriors 122-101 to advance to the Western Conference finals.

LeBron James delivered a masterful 30-point performance as the Lakers won the semi-final series four games to two and booked a clash with Nikola Jokic and the top-seeded Denver Nuggets for a place in the NBA Finals.

"It's going to be a great series," James told broadcaster ESPN. "They've been the number one seed in the West all season long. We give them a lot of respect."

That series tips off on Tuesday. A day later, the Miami Heat will open in the Eastern Conference finals against either the Philadelphia 76ers or the Boston Celtics.

The Heat advanced with a hard-fought 96-92 victory over the New York Knicks to win their Eastern Conference semi-final four games to two.

The Celtics will host Philadelphia in a decisive game seven today.

In Los Angeles, the Lakers led wire-to-wire, with James adding nine rebounds and nine assists as the Lakers closed out the Warriors in their second attempt after dropping game five in San Francisco.

"Not many (members) of our team have been in close-out games," James said. "So after game five up in the Bay, I knew I had to come in with a lot of aggression but be very efficient and very strategic in how I played this game."

Anthony Davis scored 17 points and pulled down 20 rebounds for Los Angeles and Austin Reaves scored 23 points -- including a half-court shot at the halftime buzzer that put the Lakers up 56-46 at the break.

Since clawing their way into the play-in tournament, the Lakers have won seven straight home games.

Their victory marked the first time that the current Warriors dynasty led by Stephen Curry and coached by Steve Kerr has lost a Western Conference playoff series.

The Warriors had reached the NBA Finals in six of the last eight seasons, winning four titles, missing the post-season in 2020 and 2021.

Curry scored 32 points but made just four of his 10 three-point shots.

### Basketball Coaches

#### Slam Temporary Court, Dunk on the Heat

PHNOM PENH (Dispatches) - Basketball coaches at the Southeast Asian Games have complained about the quality of the court, blaming the temporary linoleum surface for injuries to players.

The biennial regional sports meet in Phnom Penh is being played mostly at the brand new, China-funded Morodok Techo National Sports Complex.

While the site has a 60,000-seat athletics stadium and an aquatics centre, it lacks a venue specifically for basketball, one of the region's most hotly contested sports.

Games have been held in a multipurpose sports hall, with large linoleum tiles put down in lieu of the traditional polished wood.

There have also been problems with heat, because of insufficient air conditioning in the room, which is not fully enclosed.

And coaches are not happy. "There's no way we should be playing top-level international competitions on linoleum," said Philippines coach Chot Reyes, after his side's 105-45 win over Singapore.

He added that such tournaments also "should be played in air-conditioned gyms. Because we all know moisture and perspiration... makes it very slippery."

He ran off a list of injured players from his country's men's and women's teams, adding: "The other countries have lost players as well."

The Singapore camp agreed with Reyes' assessment, saying players had been injured because of the conditions.

"For the first two games, each game we got an injury," said assistant coach Pang Chin Hong.

"Singapore women's team, one girl it's (an injured) meniscus."

"We are quite upset," he said, showing AFP a video of a women's team match in which a full linoleum board briefly flipped up entirely.

"It's really very dangerous," he added.

The Philippines' win was a second in a row as they bounced back from a shock opening-game defeat to Cambodia, and put them on the cusp of the semi-finals.

Philippine teams have traditionally dominated SEA Games basketball, but fell to Indonesia in the final last time out in Hanoi.



They're the first eighth-seeded team to reach the conference finals since the 1999 Knicks, dispatching the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks in the first round before battling past the Knicks in a series epitomized by the hard-fought game six.

"I like it," Butler told broadcaster ESPN. "That's what we do better than anything is grind these wins out."

"We've been in games like this all year long. We're prepared for it, we stay with it til the end," Butler said.

The Heat withstood another stellar performance from Knicks guard Jalen Brunson, who scored 41 points but was harried into a crucial turnover with 16.4 seconds remaining and the Heat up by just two.

The Heat were finally rolling, up 92-86 with less than a minute to play, when Miami guard Gabe Vincent was assessed a flagrant foul after catching Brunson in the face with an elbow as they jockeyed for the ball on an inbounds play.

Brunson hit both free throws and Josh Hart drove for a layup that pulled New York within two, but Brunson, under pressure from Butler and Max Strus, committed a turnover and Butler made two free throws to again extend Miami's lead.

Facing elimination, the Knicks came out strong and led 31-24 after the first quarter.

Brunson scored 22 points in the first half, but the Heat had edged ahead 51-50 at the break and the Knicks never regained the lead.

Adebayo scored 17 points in the first half, his 11 points in the second quarter helping turn the tide.

He pulled down nine rebounds with two steals and a block, with his dunk putting Miami up by six with 1:05 to play.



## Alcaraz Returns to World Number One

ROME (Dispatches) - Carlos Alcaraz guaranteed a return to the world number one spot when he took to court to play fellow Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas in the second round of the Italian Open.

The 20-year-old will overtake Novak Djokovic in the ATP rankings and is now assured of the top seeding at the French Open later this month.

Djokovic arrived in Rome with a five-point lead over Alcaraz, but as the defending champion the Serb will drop points during the tournament.

Alcaraz is not defending any points, and earns ten by beginning his opening match in the Italian capital, enough to put him on top of the rankings.

The Spaniard became the youngest ever world number one thanks to his US Open triumph last September, with Djokovic denied entry to the United States because of his Covid vaccination status.

Alcaraz will begin his 23rd week at world number one on May 22 and has a chance to leave Rome with a sizable lead.

The second seed arrived in the Italian capital on a fine run after back-to-back clay court titles in Barcelona and Madrid.



## Martin Wins French MotoGP Sprint

LE MANS (Dispatches) - Jorge Martin won the French MotoGP sprint race at Le Mans from Brad Binder and world champion Francesco Bagnaia.

Bagnaia retained the lead in the championship standings ahead of Sunday's main race with South African Binder moving into second.

Six-time world champion Marc Marquez came in fifth on his comeback after injury requiring surgery in the season-opening race in Portugal.

For Martin this was a return to the top of the podium for the first time since his one and only MotoGP win in 2021.

Setting off in fifth on the grid the Spaniard got a dream start to go second, before hitting the front and holding off Binder's KTM comfortably to pick up the 12 points.

"I'm super proud, coming back to be first after a long time, even if it's 'only' in the sprint but it's good for energy and for tomorrow" said the Ducati-Pramac rider.

"Maintaining that gap with Brad wasn't easy," he added after finally claiming the win following two podium placed-finishes in the dash that is a feature of every MotoGP weekend this year.

Bagnaia, who started on pole as he will again for Sunday's main event, had a terrific scrap with Marquez and now leads the standings by 23 points.

"My objective was to win, but I lost position, Marc was aggressive, it was tense out there, I was losing time, but then everything turned out okay," said the Ducati factory star.

For Binder this was another profitable sprint performance after winning the dash in Spain last time out and Argentina.

"I knew the start was everything, I knew I could bring it home in a decent spot," said Binder who came through from only qualifying 10th on the grid.

The afternoon did not go well for both Jack Miller, the Australian crashing his KTM at the end of the opening lap - and Fabio Quartararo.

France's 2021 world champion was always going to be up against it after only starting off in 13th, on the fifth row, on his struggling Yamaha.

## Bayern on Title Course After Putting Six Past Schalke

DORTMUND (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich have gone four points clear atop the Bundesliga table ahead of Borussia Dortmund's late match with a dominant 6-0 win at home over struggling Schalke.

Veteran Bayern captain Thomas Mueller, given a starting berth after being named on the bench in his side's last two matches, settled the home side's nerves early, slotting in after 21 minutes, his first goal in eight matches.

Joshua Kimmich doubled Bayern's lead shortly after, converting a penalty despite losing his footing after Jamal Musiala copped an arm in the box.

Any slim hopes Schalke had of a comeback were snuffed out early in the second stanza, Gnabry collecting a pass from Joao Cancelo and hammering in at the near post scored for the third consecutive match.

Gnabry added another midway through the second half, French teenager Mathys Tel made it five and Noussair Mazraoui scored his first goal in Bayern colours to put the home side on course for an 11th straight Bundesliga title.

The loss leaves Schalke, who had climbed out of the relegation playoff for the first time since September with last week's win at Mainz, in the relegation playoff spot with three games remaining.

Elsewhere, Union Berlin solidified their hopes of a first Champions League appearance, leapfrogging RB Leipzig into third and going three clear of fifth placed Freiburg with a 4-2 home win.

Union set up the victory with a first-half blitz, Sheraldo Becker scoring twice in two minutes after Kevin Behrens opened the scoring with five minutes gone.



## Djokovic Beats Etcheverry in Rome Opener

ROME (Dispatches) - Holder Novak Djokovic began his hunt for a seventh Italian Open title by battling past the unseeded Tomas Etcheverry 7-6(5) 6-2 while women's champion Iga Swiatek delivered a masterclass to reach the third round.

Djokovic got off to a shaky start by dropping his serve in the opening game of the second-round match. The Serbian, who pulled out of the Madrid Open last month, wore a compression sleeve on his right arm, sparking concerns about a niggling elbow issue.

The 22-times Grand Slam champion, who had a first-round bye, also appeared unwell at one point and asked his team for medical assistance during a changeover.

He squandered a chance to break back immediately but pounced when Etcheverry double-faulted and sent a forehand wide to level the set at 3-3.

The Argentinian forced a tiebreak where he raced ahead 5-3 but Djokovic began to dictate terms by stretching the rallies and clawed his way back to wrap up the set before grabbing an early break in the next.

A more relaxed Djokovic mixed up his game with some delicate drops en route to a 5-3 lead and closed out the victory on serve when his opponent found the net.

"I haven't played too many claycourt matches this season but you can say it was the best one so far," said Djokovic.

"Still not at the desired level, still finding the shots and that groove on the court. It's always a little tricky playing somebody for the first time. He's a claycourt specialist and started better than I did."

